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**NEW CONSUMER STUDY SHOWS INCREASES IN DIRECTORY
ASSISTANCE**

TRAC Directory Assistance Chart Shows Consumers How To Save

April 12, 2001, Washington, D.C. - - The Telecommunications Research & Action Center released a survey today that found increases in cost for most forms of directory assistance since June 2000. TRAC, the nation's leading non-profit group in telecommunications, has been publishing rate comparisons for consumers and small businesses since 1984.

In long distance directory assistance (1-area code-555-1212), MCI WorldCom and Sprint increased their rates to \$1.99, from \$1.49 and \$1.50 respectively. However, prices for special "10-10" and "00" services remained steady: AT&T "00" and "10-10-ATT-00" - \$1.49, MCI WorldCom "10-10-9000" - 99 cents and Sprint "00" - \$1.45. And you can request 2 listings per call.

Consumers can save money on long distance directory assistance by using National 411 (N411). In the Los Angeles, California area, this costs the same as local 411- 46 cents. Even in areas of the country where the charge is higher (95 cents) - Dallas, New York, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. - N411 is always cheaper than dialing 1-area code-555-1212.

Local directory assistance (411) has increased more dramatically in price. In Atlanta for example, the cost for each 411 call has gone up to 95 cents (from 85 cents). You now only get one listing, where back in June 2000, you got two. In Dallas, the rate has increased from 30 cents to 75 cents, but you now get five free listings per month instead of three. Seattle area consumers saw prices go from 60 to 95 cents per listing. They also lost the one call per month free that they enjoyed as of TRAC's June 2000 study. The most dramatic increase was in the Denver area. In June 2000, you received one free listing per month and were charged 40 cents for each listing thereafter. Now, it's \$1.25 per listing with none free.

The Chicago area remained steady at 95 cents per listing, as well as the New York area at 45 cents per listing. Los Angeles consumers still get 3 calls per month free before being charged 36 cents, but are allowed to request 3 listings per call. Washington, D.C.

consumers still enjoy 5 calls per month free with a 36 cents rate thereafter, but are allowed 2 listings per call.

TRAC also decided for the first time to price directory assistance with the nation's five largest wireless phone companies. TRAC found that the price for local and national 411 on wireless phones is sometimes higher, but sometimes lower, than land line. For example, local 411 is cheaper from your land phone in Washington, D.C., New York, Los Angeles and Dallas, but more expensive in Denver. Sprint Wireless offers directory assistance at 99 cents per call, but you can request up to 4 listings. That's under a quarter each !

But at 85-99 cents, wireless N411 directory assistance is always cheaper than dialing 1-area code-555-1212 from your land phone. Wireless N411 directory assistance is also cheaper than Sprint's land line "00" service and AT&T's "00" and "10-10" services. And depending on who your carrier is, wireless N411 directory assistance may also beat MCI WorldCom's 10-10-9000 land line directory assistance service.

"Consumers may not know they are paying so much for directory assistance," said Samuel A. Simon, Chair of TRAC. "Prices for directory assistance vary from one part of the country to another. The amount of free listings and listings you are allowed per call also varies. Since you may not even get an accurate listing, it is important for consumers to select the least costly option every time they need directory assistance."

To obtain a copy of TRAC's Directory Assistance Comparison Chart, send a \$1 check or money order and a self addressed stamped envelope (55 cents postage) to TRAC, P.O. Box 27279, Washington, D.C. 20005. You can also order an electronic or hard copy with a credit card on TRAC's website, www.trac.org.

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TRAC HOT-TIPS FOR CONSUMERS

1. **Take advantage of free listings !** "Save up" your requests and ask for more than one listing where allowed. Before you call directory assistance, make sure you know all the listings you need, rather than calling for just one. If you discover a few minutes later that you need another listing, you pay the full fee all over again.
2. **Use Internet Look Ups.** TRAC's site links to many online directory assistance look ups. These are free, so use them whenever you can.
3. **Dial 411 !** Use 411, whether national or local, whenever possible. It's almost always cheapest. Let's say you make 10 calls in a month, requesting one local directory assistance listing each time. In the Washington, D.C. area, using 411 will cost you \$1.80. Using AT&T's heavily advertised "00" will cost you

\$14.90. Using 411 saves you \$13.10 ! Get the chart to see the savings in other areas !

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